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ABSTRACT

This study investigated employment patterns of law school graduates using cross-sectional data from the 1993 National Survey of College Graduates for 3,207 individuals meeting the definition of "law school graduates." The results indicate that, overall, law school graduates have high rates of labor force participation, are employed in legal occupations at a high rate, have modest rates of out-mobility from the field, and low levels of underutilization. Contrary to earlier findings, the data indicate no systematic differences in earnings for minorities and females after controlling for employment sector, experience, and occupation. Also, females are employed in legal occupations at rates similar to those of males. For those law school graduates who leave legal occupations, most do so by choice and perceive their degree to be of value in their new job. (Contains 4 figures, 16 tables, and 8 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Employment Patterns of Law School Graduates

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Executive Summary

Employment Patterns of Law School Graduates

Several recent studies have described the composition and characteristics of the lawyer population. These studies have focused mainly on practicing lawyers. However, nationwide, approximately 25% of law school graduates are not working in the legal field. Little is known about this group of individuals. The current study is intended to describe the employment patterns of all law school graduates regardless of their field of employment.

The 1993 National Survey of College Graduates (hereafter the NSCG) collected data from a nationally representative cross-section of the population with college degrees, including approximately 3,200 with law degrees. These respondents represent the national population of approximately 946,000 individuals who held law degrees at the time of the survey.

Labor Force Participation and Utilization

- Of the individuals who held law degrees in 1993, 91.3% were employed and 2.1% were unemployed. The labor force participation rate (LFPR) of this group was, therefore, 93.4%.

- LFPRs are lower for women than men and lower for minorities than whites. Household structure affects LFPR in that marriage increases the LPFR of men and decreases the LFPR for women. The presence of children in the household also increases the LFPR for males. Among women, the presence of children decreases the LFPR for married women but increases it for single women.

- The study reveals a low rate of labor force under-utilization (the obverse of LFPR) for law school graduates. In 1993, only 2.1% of law school graduates were unemployed, 1.6% were involuntarily working outside their field, 1% were involuntarily working part-time, and 0.4% were "discouraged workers," that is, not working or looking for work because of a lack of job prospects. In general, underutilization rates were higher for women, minorities, and new law school graduates.

Occupational Employment

- The vast majority of the projected 863,000 employed law school graduates in 1993—81.4%—were working as lawyers and judges. The rates were virtually identical for females (81.2%) and males (81.4%). Among new graduates, 84.1% were practicing law. These percentages mean that more than 160,000 law school graduates were not working as lawyers or judges in 1993.

- The largest group of law school graduates working in "nonlegal" occupations in 1993 (almost 56,000, 5.6% of those employed) worked in executive management positions. Only about 6% of the law graduates who worked as executives viewed their law degrees as unrelated to their work.

- Approximately 24,000 of the nation's law graduates were working as financial specialists or in work related to securities.

- College law teaching accounted for 1.5% of those with law degrees in 1993. Women were more likely (2.4% were in academic law) than men to be law teachers.

I thank Michael G. Finn, Senior Economist at Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, and Jack Heinz, Northwestern University School of Law, for their helpful suggestions and comments. I wish to thank the Law School Admission Council for their support of this work.

Career Progression

- The cross-sectional data provided by the NSCG database suggest that law school graduates tend to move away from the law as their careers progress. In 1993, approximately 84% of new graduates were working as lawyers and judges. However, the percentage had dropped to 70 among those who had been out of law school for 30 years.

- The two most common occupations among individuals who leave the law appear to be management positions and academic law. As the number of years since graduation increased among the 1993 holders of law degrees, so did the percentages of them working in both of these professions.

Income

- The median income for all law school graduates in 1993 was $70,000. Median incomes were highest for those who were self-employed and lowest for the those employed in the military sector.

- There were sizeable differences in income among subgroups of law school graduates. The median income of women was $55,000, compared with $75,000 among men.

- Compared with a median income of $70,000 among white law school graduates, blacks earned $60,000; Hispanics $55,000; Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans, $50,000. However, racial differences in median income varied substantially among employment sectors and, in some cases, were higher for minorities than whites. For example, black law school graduates employed by the U.S. government earned salaries that were 12% higher than the median for all law school graduates employed in this sector, and Hispanics earned 25% more than the median. In the not-for-profit sector, Asian/Pacific Islanders earned 18% more than the overall median for that sector.

- The earnings of law school graduates not employed in the field of law varied according to their reasons for not practicing law. Law school graduates who left their degree field for promotions or higher pay typically earned more than the median for those who remained in the field. Those who left the law for involuntary reasons, such as family responsibilities or because they could not find a job in the law, tended to earn salaries that were lower than the median for law school graduates in legal positions.

Occupational Mobility

- Between 1988 and 1993, 3.1% of law school graduates left the field of law and 1.8% who had been working outside of the field took jobs in the legal profession. Thus, the net mobility during this five-year period was a loss of 1.3% of legal field employment in 1988.

- Among this population, occupational mobility varied by career age, or years since receiving the law degree. Between 3 and 4% of those who held law degrees in 1993 reported having left the field within the first 15 years following their graduation. Mobility rates were lower for the period from 16 to 25 years since receipt of law degree, but increased for those who had been out of law school for 25 years or more. Those who had been out of law school for 30 years or more left the field of law at the highest rate.

- The reason most frequently given for leaving the field by law school graduates was change in career and professional interests, suggesting that most occupational mobility out of the law is voluntary. However, reasons also seem to vary with career age. The most common reasons for leaving among new graduates, those who had been out of law school for between one and five years, were working conditions, changes in career and professional interests, and family-related issues. Among those who were out of law school for 30 years or more, 86% said they left the field as a result of change in career or professional interests.

Abstract

This report investigates employment patterns of law school graduates using cross-sectional data from the 1993 National Survey of College Graduates. The results indicate that, overall, law school graduates have high rates of labor force participation, are employed in legal occupations at a high rate, have modest rates of out-mobility from the field, and low levels of underutilization. Contrary to earlier findings, the data indicate no systematic differences in earnings for minorities and females once one controls for employment sector, experience, and occupation. Also, females are employed in legal occupations at similar rates to males. For those law school graduates who leave legal occupations, most do so by choice and perceive their degree to be of value in their new job.

Introduction

Several recent studies have profiled the composition and characteristics of the lawyer population.[1] These studies to a large extent focus upon practicing lawyers. The purpose of this study is to examine the population of law school graduates regardless of labor market status. Using data from the 1993 National Survey of College Graduates (hereafter the NSCG), this report examines cross-sectional characteristics of individuals who hold law school degrees as of April 15, 1993.

The NSCG is a resurvey of 1990 Census participants who reported a bachelor's degree or higher degree from any source. The NSCG sampled approximately 215,000 individuals, of which approximately 168,000 responded (78% response rate). The sample size varied based upon strata. The following data restrictions should be noted:

- Unless otherwise noted, the following tables and statistics exclude persons over 65 years of age.
- "Law school graduates" are defined as individuals whose most recent or highest degree, second most recent or highest degree, or third most recent or highest degree is either (1) "Other professional degree" and the field of study is "Law/Prelaw/Legal Studies," or (2) "Doctorate" and the field of study is "Law/Prelaw/Legal Studies."
- Because all data in this report are sample estimates, small differences in percentages should not be considered significant.[2] The sampling was stratified with minorities and females sampled at higher rates.

There are a total of 3,207 raw records that meet the above definition of "law school graduates" which represent a population of 946,000 individuals. Of these, 97% are individuals who hold an "other professional" degree; the remaining 3% hold a doctorate.

Overview

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics of law school graduates in 1993 by sex, race, and recent degree recipients ("new grads," or those who have received their law degree within five years or since 1988). Of this population, almost three-fourths (73.1%) are male. However, the sex distribution of law school graduates is shifting dramatically, with females representing 43.1% of new graduates. Thus almost 3 of every 10 females in the field have received their degree within five years, and 60% have had their degrees 10 years or less; being a female law graduate is almost synonymous with being a recent graduate. The population in 1993 was composed of 91.5% whites, 3.4% blacks, 2.7% Hispanics, 2.2% Asian or Pacific Islander, and a trace (0.2%) of American Indians. The recent growth in law school graduates has resulted in almost 1 in 5 (19%) of all law school graduates having received their degree within five years, and the race/sex composition of new graduates is markedly different from that of the total population (Table 2).

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[1] See, for example, American Bar Association Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession (1998); Nelson (1994), p. 391; and Curran and Carson (1994).

[2] See National Science Foundation, Science Resources Studies, "Calculating Standard Errors" [online]. Available: http://srsstats.sbe.nsf.gov/stderr32.html.

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics of law school graduates, 1993

	Total	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	New Graduates
Count	946,150	691,722	254,443	865,899	31,920	25,914	20,421	1,628	180,179
Percentage of Total	100.0%	73.1%	26.9%	91.5%	3.4%	2.7%	2.2%	0.2%	19.0%
				Percent of Column Count					
Female	26.9%	0.0%	100.0%	26.0%	43.5%	33.5%	29.2%	36.9%	43.1%
Disabled	2.8%	3.1%	2.3%	2.8%	2.9%	3.2%	0.0%	N	1.4%
Married	72.5%	76.3%	62.1%	73.5%	50.0%	65.7%	66.3%	75.1%	51.5%
Divorced/Separated	9.5%	8.9%	11.2%	9.3%	16.5%	12.5%	4.3%	N	7.6%
Not in Labor Force	6.6%	4.9%	11.2%	6.5%	4.5%	8.7%	10.8%	N	9.1%
With Children at Home	52.2%	54.4%	46.2%	52.3%	47.2%	51.6%	55.2%	50.5%	30.0%
New Law Graduate	19.0%	14.8%	30.5%	18.6%	21.8%	24.9%	24.0%	31.1%	100.0%
Working as Lawyer/ Judge	74.3%	76.0%	69.5%	75.5%	63.3%	66.5%	52.3%	68.7%	72.8%
Not U.S. Citizen (Visa)	1.1%	1.0%	1.5%	0.4%	3.5%	4.4%	23.4%	N	1.5%
Military Experience	23.5%	31.4%	2.1%	24.0%	22.9%	18.5%	8.7%	N	6.1%
				Mean of Column Count					
Biological Age (years)	40	41.4	36.1	40.1	39.6	37.9	37.6	37.6	30
Career Age (years)	15.4	17.4	10	15.6	13.8	12.8	13.6	11.8	2.8
Annual Salary (median)	$70,000	$75,000	$55,000	$70,000	$60,000	$55,000	$50,000	$50,400	$43,500
Full-time Professional Experience (years)	15.9	17.8	10.5	16.1	14.7	13.2	11.2	13.7	5.8

Note. Other races excluded. New Graduates are individuals who received a law degree within five years or less (in 1988 or later). N = small number, data suppressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

TABLE 2
Race and sex distribution of new graduates and experienced law school graduates, 1993

	Experienced Graduates	New Graduates
Total	100.0%	100.0%
White	92.0%	89.5%
Black	3.3%	3.9%
Hispanic	2.5%	3.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.0%	2.7%
American Indian	0.1%	0.3%
Male	76.9%	56.9%
Female	23.1%	43.1%

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates

Overall, 2.8% of law school graduates are disabled (defined as having a work limitation). This rate is slightly higher for males than females, and lower for new graduates. The percentage of law school graduates who are married varies from a high of 75.1% (American Indian) to a low of 50% (blacks). The divorce and separation rate varies inversely with the marriage rate, with almost 10% of all law school graduates in this category.

All groups except for females and Asian/Pacific Islander have high rates of labor force participation, with fewer than 7% of all law school graduates (below the age of 66) not in the labor force. Approximately half of all law school graduates have children at home, and this rate is fairly constant across race.

Minority law school graduates are much more likely to be female than the overall population. When one restricts this to new graduates, the extent of minority female participation in law is even more dramatic: 65% of new black law school graduates are female. The comparable statistic for the other races are: Hispanic, 40.4%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 29.9%; American Indian, 59.9%; and white, 42.6%.

Almost three-fourths (74.3%) of all law school graduates identify themselves as working as a lawyer or judge. This rate varies considerably across demographic groups, from 76% of males to a little over half of the Asian/Pacific Islander. Only 1.1% of all law school graduates were not citizens, although this rate is much higher among minorities. Finally, almost 1 in 4 law school graduates has military experience (either active or previous).

In 1993, the "average" law school graduate was 40 years old, graduated from law school 15 years earlier (at approximately age 25), and made $70,000 per year.[3] There is considerable variation in these mean values across race and sex.

Labor Force Participation and Utilization

As can be seen in Table 1, 74.3% of law school graduates were working as lawyers and judges in 1993. Thus, slightly more than 25% were not working in the legal field.

Table 3 contains 1993 labor force participation data for law school graduates. Overall, 91.3% are working and 2.1% are unemployed, resulting in a labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 93.4%.[4] Thus of the 25.7% of law school graduates not working as lawyers or judges, 6.6% were not in the labor force, 2.1% were unemployed, leaving 17% working in nonlegal occupations.

The rate of labor force participation (LFPR) is based upon household decisions regarding division of household labor and labor market opportunities. Empirically, economists have found that LFPR varies with age, sex, household composition (marital status), and race as well as economic conditions. The data in Table 3 are consistent with these earlier findings, with males having the highest LFPR and LFPR varying across race.

[3] This $70,000 is equivalent to about $80,600 in 1999 purchasing power, i.e., in 1999 it took an income of $80,600 to purchase the same standard of living that $70,000 would purchase in 1993.

[4] Labor economists define the labor force as those employed plus those actively seeking work (i.e., unemployed); the labor force participation rate is the percentage of the total population in the labor force. The unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of the labor force unemployed.

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TABLE 3
Labor force (LF) participation rate of law school graduates, 1993

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	New Graduates
				TOTAL			
Total	946,164	865,899	31,921	25,913	20,420	1,628	180,179
Working	863,861	793,109	28,941	22,702	17,438	1,471	155,952
Unemployed	19,696	16,112	1,559	959	777	N	7,779
Not in Labor Force	62,607	56,678	1,421	2,252	2,205	N	16,448
				Percent Distribution			
Working	91.3%	91.6%	90.7%	87.6%	85.4%	90.4%	86.6%
Unemployed	2.1%	1.9%	4.9%	3.7%	3.8%	N	4.3%
Not in Labor Force	6.6%	6.5%	4.5%	8.7%	10.8%	N	9.1%
Unemployment Rate	2.2%	2.0%	5.1%	4.1%	4.3%	N	4.8%
LF Participation Rate	93.4%	93.5%	95.5%	91.3%	89.2%	96.9%	90.9%
				FEMALES			
Total	254,443	225,311	13,884	8,680	5,967	601	77,603
Working	217,801	192,702	12,623	7,320	4,661	495	64,155
Unemployed	8,272	6,968	686	477	N	N	4,189
Not in Labor Force	28,370	25,641	575	883	1,220	N	9,259
				Percent Distribution			
Working	85.6%	85.5%	90.9%	84.3%	78.1%	82.4%	82.7%
Unemployed	3.3%	3.1%	4.9%	5.5%	1.4%	N	5.4%
Not in Labor Force	11.1%	11.4%	4.1%	10.2%	20.4%	N	11.9%
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	3.5%	5.2%	6.1%	1.8%	N	6.1%
LF Participation Rate	88.9%	88.6%	95.9%	89.8%	79.6%	91.5%	88.1%
				MALES			
Total	691,721	640,586	18,037	17,234	14,454	1,029	102,574
Working	646,062	600,405	16,319	15,383	12,778	977	91,796
Unemployed	11,424	9,144	872	482	691	N	3,590
Not in Labor Force	34,237	31,037	846	1,369	985	N	7,188
				Percent Distribution			
Working	93.4%	93.7%	90.5%	89.3%	88.4%	94.9%	89.5%
Unemployed	1.7%	1.4%	4.8%	2.8%	4.8%	N	3.5%
Not in Labor Force	4.9%	4.8%	4.7%	7.9%	6.8%	N	7.0%
Unemployment Rate	1.7%	1.5%	5.1%	3.0%	5.1%	N	3.8%
LF Participation Rate	95.1%	95.2%	95.3%	92.1%	93.2%	100.0%	93.0%

Note. N = small number, data suppressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Special Focus: Law School Graduates Over Age 65

The data in this report are restricted to those age 65 and under. However, the NSCG contains data on individuals up through age 75. The table below contains descriptive statistics of this group of older law school graduates (age 66–75).

Descriptive Statistics of Law School Graduates Over Age 65, 1993

	65 & Under	Over 65
Count	946,150	43,888
Percentage of Total	100.0%	100.0%
	Percent of Column Count	
Female	26.9%	3.0%
Black	3.4%	2.5%
Hispanic	2.7%	3.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.2%	0.2%
Disabled	2.8%	16.9%
Married	72.5%	83.2%
Divorced/Separated	9.5%	4.3%
Not in Labor Force	6.6%	52.5%
With Children at Home	52.2%	8.1%
Working as Lawyer/Judge	74.3%	36.0%
Not U.S. Citizen (Visa)	1.1%	1.2%
	Mean of Column Count	
Biological Age (years)	40.0	68.8
Career Age (years)	15.4	41.9
Annual Salary (median)	$70,000	$72,115
Full-time Professional Experience (years)	15.9	36.2

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Several items in this table are surprising. First, the mean salary of older working individuals exceeds that of other law school graduates. Second, the percentage of older graduates who self-identify as Hispanic is higher than for other law school graduates. And finally, older female law school graduates are almost nonexistent.

The major exception to male-female differences in LFPR occurs among blacks, with black females having a comparable rate (95.9%) to black males (95.3%). However, males of all other races have much higher rates of labor participation than females.

Surprisingly, new graduates have a lower LFPR than all law school graduates. However, when one breaks down new graduate LFPR by sex, the rates are closer to the total LFPR (e.g., female new graduates have a LFPR = 88.1% compared to all females LFPR = 88.9%). Part of the reason that new graduates have a lower LFPR is, therefore, a result of the sex composition of new graduates.

Household structure is an important determinant of LFPR, as married couples have more participation options, and the presence of children increases the value of an hour of nonwork. Table 4 contains LFPR data on law school graduates by sex, marital status, and presence of children. These data indicate that LFPR is strongly associated with household structure, and single females exhibit labor force behavior similar to that of married males. As one would expect, the effect of marriage on LFPR is opposite for females and males, with marriage lowering female LFPR and increasing male LFPR. For males, the presence of children boosts LFPR regardless of marital status. For females, children boost LFPR only for single females; LFPR for married females falls.

TABLE 4
Labor force participation rates by sex, marital status, and presence of children, law school graduates, 1993

	Males		Females	
	Married	Single	Married	Single
Total	96.0%	92.0%	84.9%	95.3%
Children Present?				
Yes	98.3%	95.7%	82.4%	98.5%
No	91.1%	91.6%	89.6%	94.6%

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Underutilization

Overall, law school graduates have high rates of labor force participation (93.4%) and low unemployment (2.2%). However, workers can be "underutilized," i.e., working involuntarily outside their degree field (the engineer taxi driver) or working involuntarily part time. This section examines underutilization of legal resources (Table 5).

One measure of underutilization is involuntary out-of-field employment (also called underemployment), that is, working in a job unrelated to the graduate's degree when a job more related to the degree is preferred.[5] As can be seen in Table 5, 1.6% of all law school graduates identified themselves in this category, and the rate varies by race and sex. Of particular interest is the out-of-field rate for new graduates, which is almost twice the overall rate. Most new graduates take a while to find a suitable job, and these data reflect this. Females have only a slightly higher out-of-field rate than males, while minority law school graduates have rates three to four times that of whites.

A second measure of underutilization (and underemployment) is involuntary part-time work. Of the employed 1993 law school graduates, 6.7% (58,271 workers) were working part time and of this number, 9,173 indicated that one of the reasons they were working part time was because a "suitable job was not available." This is 1% of all the law school graduates in 1993. Black females have a very high involuntary part-time rate (7.4%).

A third measure of underutilization is what economists term "discouraged workers." Discouraged workers are not employed nor actively seeking work and are therefore not counted as part of the labor force. However, these workers would take a job if available; they have dropped out of the labor force because they could not find a suitable job (usually after a long unsuccessful job search). Overall, discouraged worker rates are low for law school graduates, in the range of 0.4%.

The final measure of underutilization is unemployment, defined as individuals who are not employed and are actively seeking work. Overall, 2.1% of all law school graduates in 1993 fell into this category.[6]

The summation of these types of underutilization results in an overall underutilization rate of 5% for law school graduates in 1993. In general, female underutilization rates exceed those of males, and minority rates exceed those of whites. One of the reasons for high female and minority underutilization rates is that females and minorities are more likely to be new graduates (see Table 2); the underutilization rate for new graduates is almost twice the overall rate. About 1 in 4 female Hispanic law school graduates is underutilized, while 18% of black female law school graduates fall into this category.

[5] Out-of-field simply means that the respondents perceive their jobs to be unrelated to their degrees, regardless of occupation. For example, only about 19% of law school graduates who are in top management perceive their degree to be unrelated to their job.

[6] This is not an unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is the percentage of the labor force that is unemployed.

TABLE 5
Labor force underutilization of law school graduates, 1993

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	New Graduate
				TOTAL			
Total	946,164	865,899	31,921	25,913	20,420	1,628	180,179
Involuntary Out-of-Field	14,727	11,465	1,137	1,022	905	N	5,151
Involuntary Part Time	9,173	7,326	1,196	550	N	N	3,887
Discouraged Worker	3,461	3,225	184	N	N	N	556
Unemployed	19,696	16,112	1,559	959	777	N	7,779
Total	47,057	38,128	4,076	2,531	1,682	207	17,373
				Percent of Total			
Involuntary Out-of-Field	1.6%	1.3%	3.6%	3.9%	4.4%	N	2.9%
Involuntary Part Time	1.0%	0.8%	3.7%	2.1%	N	N	2.2%
Discouraged Worker	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	N	N	N	0.3%
Unemployed	2.1%	1.9%	4.9%	3.7%	3.8%	N	4.3%
Total Underutilization Rate	5.0%	4.4%	12.8%	9.8%	8.2%	12.7%	9.6%
				FEMALES			
Total	25,4443	225,311	13,884	5,680	5,967	601	77,603
Involuntary Out-of-Field	4,883	3,409	735	689	N	N	2,380
Involuntary Part Time	3,795	2,496	1,027	272	N	N	1,210
Discouraged Worker	1,193	1,137	N	N	N	N	N
Unemployed	8,272	6,968	686	477	N	N	4,189
Total	18,143	14,010	2,504	1,438	N	N	7,835
				Percent of Total			
Involuntary Out-of-Field	1.9%	1.5%	5.3%	12.1%	N	N	3.1%
Involuntary Part Time	1.5%	1.1%	7.4%	4.8%	N	N	1.6%
Discouraged Worker	0.5%	0.5%	N	N	N	N	N
Unemployed	3.3%	3.1%	4.9%	8.4%	N	N	5.4%
Total Undertilization Rate	7.1%	6.2%	18.0%	25.3%	N	N	10.1%

(continued)

TABLE 5 (continued)

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian	New Graduate
				MALES			
Total	691,721	640,586	18,037	17,234	14,454	1,029	102,574
Involuntary Out-of-Field	9,894	8,056	402	333	905	N	2,770
Involuntary Part Time	5,379	4,831	169	278	N	N	2,678
Discouraged Worker	2,267	2,087	128	N	N	N	500
Unemployed	11,424	9,144	872	482	691	N	3,590
Total	28,964	24,118	1,571	1,093	1,596	N	9,538
				Percent of Total			
Involuntary Out-of-Field	1.4%	1.3%	2.2%	1.9%	6.3%	N	2.7%
Involuntary Part Time	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.6%	N	N	2.6%
Discouraged Worker	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	N	N	N	0.5%
Unemployed	1.7%	1.4%	4.8%	2.8%	4.8%	N	3.5%
Total Undertilization Rate	4.2%	3.8%	8.7%	6.3%	11.0%	N	9.3%

Note. N = small number, data suppressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Occupational Employment

As seen in Table 3, about 864,000 law school graduates were employed in 1993, which was 91.3% of the total number of law school graduates (946,000). Table 6 contains data on the occupational distribution by sex and recent graduation status for these employed law school graduates.

Because law is a profession requiring extensive training, one would expect a very high percentage of employed law school graduates to be working as "Lawyers and Judges" and this is indeed the case (81.4%).[7] College law teaching accounts for another 1.5% for a total of almost 83% in legal professions. The next largest occupational group for law school graduates is "Top/Mid Level Management," (i.e., business executives) which employ 5.6% of all employed law school graduates. No other occupation employs more than 1.5% of the total.

Females are employed as lawyers and judges at approximately the same rate (81.2%) as males (81.4%). These data tend to support the findings of Mattessich and Heilman (1990) who find that "... women are no more likely than men to be currently employed in a non-law position ...." (p. 92). These findings contradict a 1995 study of Canadian lawyers by Hagan and Kay that found "... women are more likely to leave law and do so more quickly" (p. 115). A smaller percentage of females are executives; this is most likely related to their lower mean age (see "Special Focus: Career Progression of Law School Graduates" on page 14).

Overall, the occupational employment of female law school graduates follow tendencies of females in the labor market in general: higher concentration in education, clerical, and administrative support. Females are twice as likely as males to be employed as college law teachers and five times more likely to be K-12 teachers (although these numbers are small).

The occupational employment of new graduates indicates a higher percentage working as lawyers and judges, and a lower percentage working as executives. There may be some career progression of law school graduates (see "Special Focus," p. 14) with most starting out working in traditional legal fields and moving into other occupations as the career progresses.

One would assume that executive positions are more likely be filled by older experienced workers; only 2.2% of new graduates are employed in these positions. New graduates are also about three times more likely to be in Clerical and Administrative Support than all lawyers. Most new graduates in any field experience some labor market search and employment uncertainty early in their career until the ideal position is found; this statistic perhaps reflects this search.

Each of the respondents to the NSCG were asked to compare their current job to their education.[8] These results for summary occupations are contained in Table 7. Perhaps the most important statistic in Table 7 is the percentage of "Not Related." For managers, these percentages are fairly low. For other nonlegal occupations, this percentage ranges from one-third to over one-half. Clearly, most employed law school graduates perceive their education to be applicable to their jobs regardless of occupation.

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[7] Curran and Carlson (1994, Table 4) estimate 1991 total lawyer employment as 768,872. Silvestri (1995, Table 2) estimates 1994 total lawyer employment at 735,000. Silvestri estimates that this employment will grow to 918,000 in 2005.

[8] The survey question was as follows: "Thinking about the relationship between your work and your education, to what extent was your work on your principal job held during the week of April 15 related to your highest degree field?"

TABLE 6
Occupational employment of law school graduates, 1993

	Total		Male		Female		New Graduates	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Employed	863,865	100.0%	646,060	100.0%	217,802	100.0%	155,952	100.0%
Lawyers and Judges	702,829	81.4%	525,984	81.4%	176,845	81.2%	131,094	84.1%
Top/Mid Level Management	48,059	5.6%	37,203	5.8%	10,856	5.0%	3,433	2.2%
Accounting/Financial Specialists	13,135	1.5%	10,876	1.7%	2,259	1.0%	1,635	1.0%
College Law Teaching	12,722	1.5%	7,533	1.2%	5,189	2.4%	990	0.6%
Business Services (insurance, securities)	10,947	1.3%	8,323	1.3%	2,624	1.2%	860	0.6%
Other Management	7,992	0.9%	6,401	1.0%	1,591	0.7%	506	0.3%
Sales/Marketing Occupations	7,446	0.9%	6,802	1.1%	644	0.3%	1,688	1.1%
Clerical and Administrative Support	6,616	0.8%	3,529	0.5%	3,087	1.4%	3,914	2.5%
K-12 Teachers	5,168	0.6%	1,842	0.3%	3,326	1.5%	1,071	0.7%
Broadcasters, Writers/Editors, PR	4,542	0.5%	3,122	0.5%	1,420	0.7%	N	0.0%
Protective Service (police, guards)	4,331	0.5%	4,237	0.7%	N	0.0%	1,182	0.8%
Personnel/Labor Relations	4,222	0.5%	3,798	0.6%	424	0.2%	1,019	0.7%
Other College Teaching	4,019	0.5%	2,662	0.4%	1,357	0.6%	1,112	0.7%
Other Service Occupations	3,314	0.4%	2,629	0.4%	685	0.3%	1,015	0.7%
Computer Science	2,637	0.3%	2,435	0.4%	202	0.1%	609	0.4%
Clergy	2,444	0.3%	2,444	0.4%	N	0.0%	613	0.4%
Social Scientists	2,031	0.2%	456	0.1%	1,575	0.7%	546	0.4%
Engineers	1,863	0.2%	1,713	0.3%	150	0.1%	340	0.2%
Social Workers	1,523	0.2%	842	0.1%	681	0.3%	183	0.1%
Health Practitioners (physicians, dentists, etc.)	1,405	0.2%	1,116	0.2%	289	0.1%	345	0.2%
Other Health Practitioners (nurses, pharmacists etc)	1,344	0.2%	331	0.1%	1,013	0.5%	347	0.2%
Food Preparation (cooks, chefs)	1,339	0.2%	408	0.1%	931	0.4%	424	0.3%
Counselors	1,213	0.1%	1,018	0.2%	195	0.1%	135	0.1%
Other Health Occupations	659	0.1%	659	0.1%	N	0.0%	119	0.1%
Math/Physical Scientists	323	0.0%	323	0.0%	N	0.0%	136	0.1%
Life Scientists	179	0.0%	104	0.0%	N	0.0%	N	0.0%
All Other Occupations	11,558	1.3%	9,269	1.4%	2,289	1.1%	2634	1.7%

Note. N = small number, data surpressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

TABLE 7
Degree and job relationship by occupation, law school graduates, 1993

		Job and Degree Relationship		
	Total	Closely Related	Somewhat Related	Not Related
Total Employed	863,861	85.9%	8.1%	6.0%
Lawyers and Judges	702,828	96.7%	2.3%	1.0%
Managers/Executives/Administrators	73,408	39.7%	43.8%	16.5%
Sales/Marketing	18,393	13.7%	37.6%	48.6%
College Law Teachers	12,722	96.1%	2.8%	1.1%
Service Occupations	8,984	14.9%	33.7%	51.4%
K-12 Teachers	5,168	18.5%	21.9%	59.6%
Natural Scientists/Engineers	5,003	21.7%	26.2%	52.1%
Other College Teachers	4,019	61.7%	31.1%	7.2%
Health Related	3,409	47.2%	14.1%	38.7%
Social Scientists	2,031	44.3%	7.8%	48.0%
All Other Occupations	27,896	35.8%	27.1%	37.2%

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates

Occupational Employment by Sector

Table 8 details occupational employment by sector for law school graduates in 1993.[9] The private-for-profit and self-employed sectors employ the most law school graduates, together comprising almost 6 of every 8 employed.[10] State and local governments employ about 1 of every 8 law school graduates, with the remaining employment scattered among the other sectors. Not surprisingly, the sectors that employ the majority of law school graduates also have the highest percentage of sector employment working as lawyers and judges (private-for-profit, self-employed, and state/local government). Most self-employed law school graduates are working as lawyers or judges, as are most in the state and local government sector. A high percentage of law school graduates in the private-not-for-profit, military, and in educational institutions are not working as lawyers or judges. Management and administrative positions are the most popular nonlaw occupations in these sectors except for education, which has almost 40% in college teaching.

It has long been the pattern that minorities go into public sector law more than whites (see ABA Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession, 1998; and Nelson, 1994, p. 378). Table 9, which contains the distribution by race across employment sectors, confirms this view. Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in the public sector compared to other sectors, with a higher percentage in state, local, and U.S. government employment than in the overall total. They are underrepresented (compared to the overall total) in private-for-profit and self-employed, the two largest employment sectors. Of total military sector law graduate employment, 13% are black. U.S. government law graduate employment is 5.2% Hispanic compared to 2.6% of all law school graduates (Table 9).

[9] Because of the large number of empty cells, occupations in Table 8 are aggregated.

[10] It is not clear if employees of a law partnership would classify their sector as "private-for- profit" or "self-employed." The NSCG gives these choices to respondents: "a private-for-profit company, business or individual working for wages, salary or commissions ... self-employed in ... own business, professional practice or firm."
It is likely that a law firm partner would choose the self-employed sector, but an associate in the same firm may pick either self-employed or private-for-profit.

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TABLE 8
Occupational employment by sector, law school graduates, 1993

	Total	Private		Self-Employed	State & Local Government	Military	U.S. Government	Educational Institution	All Other
		For Profit	Not-for-Profit						
Total Employed	863,863	333,450	25,813	313,987	112,983	2,572	37,215	32,228	5,615
Percent of Total	100.0%	38.6%	3.0%	36.3%	13.1%	0.3%	4.3%	3.7%	0.6%
Natural Scientists/ Engineering	5,004	3,426	N	648	263	N	533	134	N
Health Related	3,409	392	1,730	782	237	N	N	204	N
Lawyers and Judges	702,829	263,330	14,388	290,611	96,695	1,517	29,057	2,633	4,598
Managers/Administrators	73,409	38,412	3,945	10,465	8,859	450	5,548	5,199	531
Sales and Marketing	18,393	13,509	506	3,765	2,577	N	N	177	436
Service Occupations	8,984	3,159	539	2,118	424	N	591	N	N
Social Scientists	2,030	343	571	502	N	N	140	N	N
K-12 Teachers	5,168	197	N	N	N	N	N	4,971	N
Non-Law College Teaching	4,019	N	N	149	N	N	N	3,870	N
College Law Teaching	12,723	N	525	N	N	N	146	12,052	N
All Other Occupations	27,895	10,682	3,609	4,947	3,928	605	1,136	2,988	N
					Percent Distribution				
Natural Scientists/ Engineering	0.6%	1.0%	N	0.2%	0.2%	N	1.4%	0.4%	N
Health Related	0.4%	0.1%	6.7%	0.2%	0.2%	N	N	0.6%	N
Lawyers and Judges	81.4%	79.0%	55.7%	92.6%	85.6%	59.0%	78.1%	8.2%	81.9%
Managers/Administrators	8.5%	11.5%	15.3%	3.3%	7.8%	17.5%	14.9%	16.1%	9.5%
Sales and Marketing	2.1%	4.1%	2.0%	1.2%	0.0%	N	N	0.5%	7.8%
Service Occupations	1.0%	0.9%	2.1%	0.7%	2.3%	N	1.6%	N	N
Social Scientists	0.2%	0.1%	2.2%	0.2%	0.4%	N	0.4%	N	N
K-12 Teachers	0.6%	0.1%	N	N	N	N	N	15.4%	N
Non-Law College Teaching	0.5%	N	N	0.0%	N	N	N	12.0%	N
College Law Teaching	1.5%	N	2.0%	N	N	N	0.4%	37.4%	N
All Other Occupations	3.2%	3.2%	14.0%	1.6%	3.5%	23.5%	3.1%	9.3%	N

Note. N = small number, data suppressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

TABLE 9

Employment by race, sex, experience, and sector, law school graduates, 1993

	Total	Private		Self-Employed	State & Local Government	Military	U.S. Government	Educational Institution	All Other
		For Profit	Not-for-Profit						
Total Employed	863,865	333,449	25,814	313,987	112,984	2,573	37,216	32,226	5,616
Percent of Total	100.0%	38.6%	3.0%	36.3%	13.1%	0.3%	4.3%	3.7%	0.7%
White	793,109	312,768	21,460	294,792	97,539	2,145	32,273	26,999	5,133
Black	28,941	6,828	2,305	6,452	7,741	334	2,057	3,059	165
Hispanic	22,703	6,820	1,058	6,664	4,715	N	1,935	1,322	N
Asian/Pacific Islander	17,440	6,678	641	5,821	2,585	N	744	798	173
Native American	1,471	355	201	258	404	N	155	N	N
Other	201	N	149	N	N	N	52	N	N
Male	646,061	246,762	15,984	264,205	69,462	2,166	24,706	18,692	4,084
Female	217,800	86,687	9,830	49,781	43,522	406	12,509	13,534	1,531
New Graduates	155,952	85,467	4,305	23,666	27,398	1,937	7,803	4,760	616
Experienced Graduates	707,910	247,982	21,509	290,321	85,586	636	29,413	27,466	5,000
	Percent Distribution								
White	91.8%	93.8%	83.1%	93.9%	86.3%	83.4%	86.7%	83.8%	91.4%
Black	3.4%	2.0%	8.9%	2.1%	6.9%	13.0%	5.5%	9.5%	2.9%
Hispanic	2.6%	2.0%	4.1%	2.1%	4.2%	N	5.2%	4.1%	1.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.0%	2.0%	2.5%	1.9%	2.3%	N	2.0%	2.5%	3.1%
Native American	0.2%	0.1%	0.8%	0.1%	0.4%	N	0.4%	N	N
Other	0.0%	N	0.6%	N	N	N	0.1%	N	N
Male	74.8%	74.0%	61.9%	84.1%	61.5%	84.2%	66.4%	58.0%	72.7%
Female	25.2%	26.0%	38.1%	15.9%	38.5%	15.8%	33.6%	42.0%	27.3%
New Graduates	18.1%	25.6%	16.7%	7.5%	24.2%	75.3%	21.0%	14.8%	11.0%
Experienced Graduates	81.9%	74.4%	83.3%	92.5%	75.8%	24.7%	79.0%	85.2%	89.0%

Note. N = small number, data suppressed.

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

The data in Table 6 indicate that management attracts the most law school graduates in nonlegal professions. Is there a career progression into and out of law into management?

Figure 1 contains information regarding the percentage of all employed law school graduates working as lawyers and judges by career age (years since degree). These data show a steady movement out of law into other occupations over one's career, dropping from 84% (new graduates) to 70% (40 years after graduation).

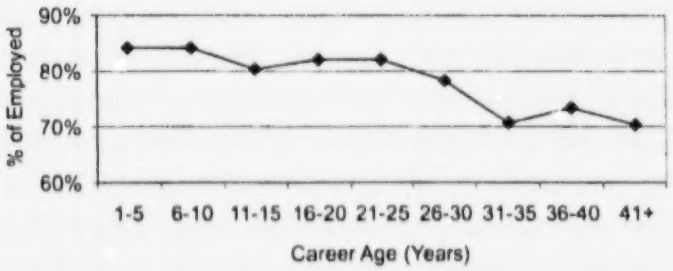

FIGURE 1. *Law graduates working as lawyers*

Figure 2 contains career progression data for law school graduates working in management positions. As the data show, there is a net movement into management occupations over a law school graduate's career, peaking at 17% of employed at career age 30–35 years.

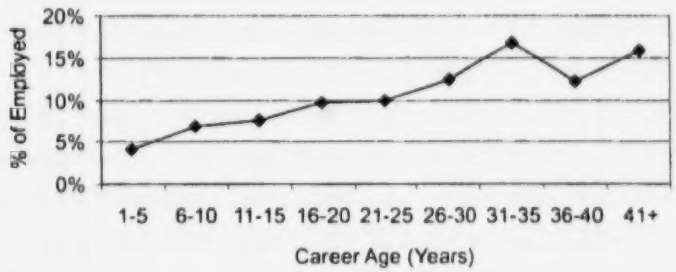

FIGURE 2. *Law graduates in management*

Figure 3 contains career progression data regarding college teaching of law. These data indicate that academic law as an occupation for law school graduates peaks at career age 36–40 (4.3% of employed), then declines.

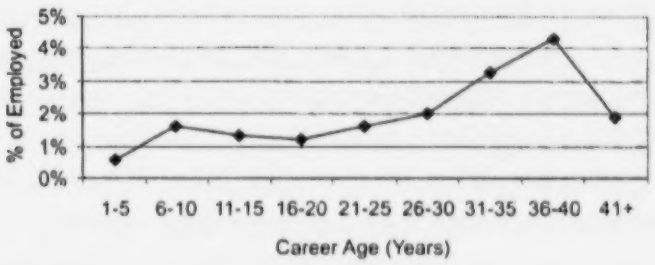

FIGURE 3. *Law graduates working as law professors*

Employment of female law school graduates across sectors indicates substantial differences from males. Female law graduates are more likely to be working in the private not-for-profit, government, and educational institutions than in other sectors. For males, the self-employed and military sectors show a disproportionate share of total law graduates.

New law school graduates comprise 18.1% of all 1993 employed law school graduates. New graduates are attracted to the private-for-profit, public sector, and military sectors. Of law school graduates employed in the military, three-fourths have had their degree five years or less.

Income

Table 10 contains median income data for employed law school graduates in 1993 by sector, race, sex, and experience. The median income for all employed law school graduates in 1993 was $70,000.[11] The self-employed sector has the highest median income, although law graduates in the private-for-profit and all other sectors have relatively high incomes. The military sector, which employs only 0.3% of all law school graduates, has the lowest median earnings.

Overall, white law school graduates have the highest median earnings. This is consistent with several studies that have found lower earnings for females and minorities (e.g., Hagan & Kay, 1995; Nelson 1994; Rosen, 1992). However, racial differences in median earnings are partially driven by the distribution of races across sectors; that is, black law graduates are much more likely than whites to work in the public sector. To control for this, Table 10 contains median earnings by race controlling for sector employment.

When one examines the median earnings by sector, one finds several employment sectors where minority median earnings exceed the total. For example, median earnings for black law graduates exceed that of whites in the total in the private-for-profit, state/local government, and U.S. government sectors. These findings for the private-for-profit sector are particularly surprising, especially in light of a recent report concluding that "... minority representation in most upper-level jobs remains minuscule, especially in the for-profit (private) sector" (ABA Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession, 1998, p. v.). These NSCG data indicate that on the contrary, minorities command a hiring premium when one controls for practice setting. This finding is deserving of additional investigation.

In the U.S. government sector, black median earnings are 12% higher than the median for all employed in this sector. Hispanic median earnings in the U.S. government sector are 25% higher than the total of all law graduates in that sector, and Asian/Pacific Islanders median earnings in the not-for-profit sector are 18% higher than the overall median.

Females have median earnings exceeding those of males in the not-for-profit, military, and U.S. government sectors. Females have the highest median earnings in the U.S. government sector, followed by private-for-profit employment.

[11] All income figures are in 1993 dollars. To convert these 1993 incomes into 1999 equivalents, multiply by 1.15. Thus a 1993 salary of $70,000 is equivalent to a 1999 salary of approximately $80,500.

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TABLE 10
Median income by race, experience, and sector, law school graduates, 1993

	Total	Private		Self-Employed	State & Local Government	Military	U.S. Government	Educational Institution	All Other
		For Profit	Not-for-Profit						
Total Employed	$70,000	$75,000	$51,000	$80,000	$54,000	$40,000	$64,179	$55,000	$78,000
White	$70,000	$75,000	$51,000	$84,000	$54,550	$40,000	$63,989	$56,000	$78,000
Black	$60,000	$78,000	$45,000	$52,000	$55,824	N	$72,000	$45,000	N
Hispanic	$55,000	$55,000	$43,500	$60,000	$51,885	N	$80,000	$42,000	N
Asian/Pacific Islander	$50,000	$60,000	$60,000	$52,000	$40,000	N	$56,576	$45,737	N
Native American	$50,400	$46,000	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Other	$41,205	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Male	$75,000	$80,000	$48,000	$85,000	$60,000	$36,020	$63,989	$62,400	$78,000
Female	$55,000	$62,000	$52,000	$60,000	$42,000	$40,000	$66,050	$43,700	$60,000
New Graduates	$43,500	$50,000	$26,000	$41,600	$35,000	$36,020	$40,298	$40,000	$45,000
Experienced Graduates	$78,000	$85,000	$52,000	$87,500	$61,000	$70,295	$67,645	$56,000	$78,000
	Ratio of Median by Race, Sex, and Experienced to Total Employed Median								
Total Employed	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
White	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.05	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.00
Black	0.86	1.04	0.88	0.65	1.03	N	1.12	0.82	N
Hispanic	0.79	0.73	0.85	0.75	0.96	N	1.25	0.76	N
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.71	0.80	1.18	0.65	0.74	N	0.88	0.83	N
Native American	0.72	0.61	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Other	0.59	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Male	1.07	1.07	0.94	1.06	1.11	0.90	1.00	1.13	1.00
Female	0.79	0.83	1.02	0.75	0.78	1.00	1.03	0.79	0.77
New Graduates	0.62	0.67	0.51	0.52	0.65	0.90	0.63	0.73	0.58
Experienced Graduates	1.11	1.13	1.02	1.09	1.13	1.76	1.05	1.02	1.00

Note. Median values excluded if fewer than seven observations.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates

The sex and race differences in median earnings are further exaggerated by the higher percentage of females and minorities who are new law graduates. For example, 30.5% of females are new graduates compared with 14.8% of males; 21.8% of blacks are new graduates compared with 18.6% of whites. Also, the percentage of law school graduates who are working as lawyers or judges is smaller for minorities (Table 1). To control for these differences, Table 11 examines median earnings of new law graduates working as lawyers or judges. Because of the small number of observations, employment sectors in Table 11 are aggregated into private (which includes private-for-profit, private-not-for-profit, and self-employed), government (state, local, and U.S.), and other (military, education, and other).

When one controls for experience by examining only new law school graduates, race and sex differences in median earnings diminish. Indeed, there appear to be no systematic race or sex differences in median income. These findings directly contradict several earlier studies such as Nelson (1994), Rosen (1992), and Hagan and Kay (1995). Blacks have slightly higher median incomes than whites in the private sector, and earnings in the government sector are 96% of white income ($33,623 compared to $35,000 for whites). Hispanic median earnings exceed that of whites in both private and public sectors. The lower total earnings of Hispanic new law graduates working as lawyers or judges is driven by their higher relative concentration in public sector law.[12]

The earnings gap for females is also closed substantially. For all law school graduates, median female earnings are 73% of males (Table 10, $55,000 vs. $75,000 for males); for new graduates working as lawyers or judges this statistic is 87% (Table 11). However, this overall statistic is driven by concentration of female law graduates in public sector law. When one decomposes Table 11 median earnings by sector, females are 95% of males in the private sector, 100% in the government sector, and 125% in the "other" sector.

TABLE 11
Median income by race and aggregate sector; new law school graduates working as lawyers or judges in 1993

	Total	Private	Government	Other
Total Employed	$44,000	$50,000	$35,000	$36,020
White	$44,000	$49,400	$35,000	$36,020
Black	$41,265	$50,000	$33,623	N
Hispanic	$42,000	$50,500	$40,800	N
Asian/Pacific Islander	$52,000	$55,000	$36,400	N
Native American	$22,656	N	N	N
Minority	$45,000	$52,000	$36,400	N
Male	$46,000	$50,000	$35,000	$36,020
Female	$40,289	$47,500	$35,000	$45,000

Note. N = small number, data suppressed if fewer than seven observations. Minority includes all nonwhite races.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Earnings by Occupation

Table 12 contains earnings by sex, race, and occupation. Because of empty cells, nonwhites are combined into a "Minority" category. Not surprisingly, law school graduates have the highest median earnings ($72,000) when they are working as lawyers or judges, the field for which they are trained. However, this is not true for all demographic groups: male and minority law graduates have the highest median earnings in academic law; female law graduates have higher median earnings working as managers or in sales and marketing occupations; and whites have highest median salaries in health-related occupations (see "Special Focus; The Kessler Effect," p. 20).

[12] Lack of observations prevented calculating this statistic for Native Americans and other races.

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Overall, those who move into management, executive, and administrative positions do not suffer much of a salary penalty, making 97% ($70,000) as much as those who work as lawyers or judges. College teaching in the legal field and sales/marketing occupations follow closely behind in terms of median earnings.[13] In academic law, minority median earnings exceed those of whites; in sales/marketing occupations female median earnings exceed those of males.

TABLE 12
Median earnings for law school graduates by occupation, experience, race, and sex, 1993

	Total	Male	Female	White	Minority	New Graduates
All Occupations	$70,000	$75,000	$55,000	$70,000	$55,000	$43,500
Lawyers and Judges	$72,000	$78,000	$56,000	$72,600	$60,000	$44,000
Management/Administration	$70,000	$70,200	$64,000	$72,000	$60,000	$52,711
College Law Teaching	$68,000	$82,000	$56,000	$65,600	$72,500	N
Sales/Marketing	$65,000	$60,000	$78,000	$70,000	N	N
Health Related	$60,000	$66,000	$52,000	$96,000	$41,205	$66,000
Natural Science/Engineering	$51,000	$51,000	$46,800	$51,000	N	N
Service Occupations	$50,000	$51,740	$36,878	$51,740	$40,000	$51,740
Other College Teaching	$46,000	$54,000	$40,000	$46,000	$40,000	N
Social Science	$41,500	$42,000	$41,500	$41,500	N	N
Teaching K-12	$40,000	$22,000	$40,000	$40,000	$32,000	N
All Other Occupations	$35,000	$36,000	$30,000	$36,000	$33,600	$25,000

Note. N = small number, data suppressed if fewer than seven observations. Minority includes all nonwhite races.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Table 13 examines median earnings by how closely law school graduates perceive their law degree to be related to their work. One would expect that the more useful the academic training is to a given occupation, the higher the median earnings. However, the data in Table 13 show somewhat of a mixed picture, with several of the occupational groups reporting highest median earnings in the "Somewhat Related" (Natural Science/Engineering service) and "Not Related" categories (Management/Administration). These data tend to imply that law graduates can achieve success in fields outside of law.

TABLE 13
Median earnings for law school graduates by occupation and relationship of degree to job, 1993

	Closely Related		Somewhat Related		Not Related	
	Count	Earnings	Count	Earnings	Count	Earnings
Lawyers and Judges	679,757	$72,000	15,853	$55,000	7,218	$67,500
Management/Administration	29,161	$70,000	32,156	$67,200	12,094	$70,295
College Law Teaching	12,227	$68,000	353	N	142	N
Sales/Marketing	2,522	$100,000	6,923	$65,000	8,948	$50,000
Health Related	1,610	$96,000	479	N	1,320	$23,307
Natural Science/Engineering	1,084	$51,000	1,311	$70,000	2,608	$49,286
Service Occupations	1,340	$50,000	3,025	$52,000	4,619	$38,400
Other College Teaching	2,479	$54,000	1,249	N	291	N
Social Science	899	N	158	N	974	$42,000
Teaching K-12	954	N	1,133	N	3,081	$23,000
All Other Occupations	9,981	$ 35,000	7,546	$37,444	10,369	$27,040

Note. N = small number, data suppressed if fewer than seven observations.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

[13] This earnings difference is at least partially reduced by experience. The average experience of those working in management and academic law is higher than those working as lawyers and judges; see "Special Focus: Career Progression of Law School Graduates." It is also interesting to note that new graduates have higher median earnings in management and administration than in law.

Tables 14A and B focus upon those law school graduates who are working in nonlegal occupations (i.e., Tables 14A and B exclude lawyers, judges, and college law teachers). It is interesting to note that among minorities, the median earnings for those who perceived their degree and job as "somewhat related" were higher than those who perceived their degree and job as "closely related." However, there is an earnings penalty across all groups for those who perceive their degree and job as being "not related."

TABLE 14A
Median salary and reasons why law school graduates work outside degree field

	Total		Male		Female		Minority	
Degree vs. Job	Count	Median Earnings	Count	Median Earnings	Count	Median Earnings	Count	Median Earnings
Closely Related	50,030	$62,400	37,626	$62,400	12,404	$62 000	6,724	$49,000
Somewhat Related	53,977	$59,800	42,924	$62,000	11,053	$51,000	6,371	$55,000
Not Related	44,304	$49,296	31,994	$50,000	12,310	$36,878	7,260	$32,000

TABLE 14B
Median earnings and reason why degree and job not related

	Total		Male		Female		Minority	
Reason	Percent of Total Count	Median Earnings	Percent of Total Count	Median Earnings	Percent of Total Count	Median Earnings	Percent of Total Count	Median Earnings
Pay/Promotion	11.9%	$70,200	15.6%	$69,840	2.4%	N	12.6%	$69,840
Career Interests	36.0%	$50,000	39.8%	$52,000	26.1%	$40,000	22.7%	$27,000
Working Conditions	11.1%	$50,000	10.5%	$46,800	12.8%	$78,000	3.3%	$24,000
Family Related	9.7%	$48,500	5.5%	$60,000	20.7%	$48,500	8.7%	$22,000
No Job in Degree Field	15.0%	$40,000	12.9%	$50,000	20.5%	$22,000	23.7%	$39,000
Other	14.5%	$25,000	13.4%	$25,000	17.5%	$23,000	26.5%	$35,000
Job Location	1.7%	N	2.4%	N	N	N	2.5%	$29,000

Note. Excludes all legal field workers (lawyers, judges, and college law teachers).
N = fewer than seven observations.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates

Special Focus: Age-Earnings Profiles of Law School Graduates

How do earnings vary over the working life of law school graduates? Although longitudinal data are not available, one can use the cross-section of law school graduates by career age to infer age-earnings profiles. The accompanying Figure 4 graphs median earnings by sex by career age.

As can be seen, male-female earnings are fairly close early in the career. At approximately career age 10 years (when most lawyers would be "thirtysomething") median earnings by sex start to diverge. Male earnings continue to grow after career age 20, while female earnings are fairly flat. In the most senior career age group, male and female earnings are comparable. One possible reason for this "thirtysomething" divergence could be family responsibilities, which tend to fall more heavily on females.

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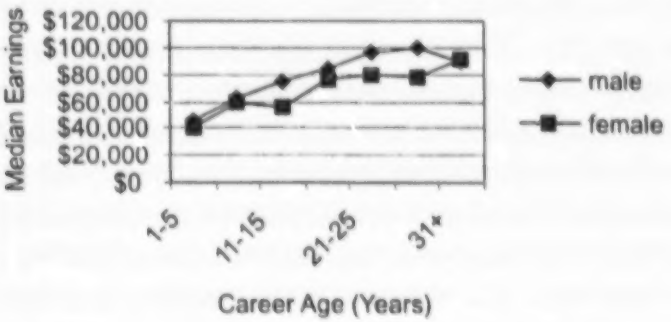

FIGURE 4. *Age earnings profile*

For those who perceived their degree and job as not related, (a total of 44,304 individuals), the NSCG asked respondents for the reasons, and these data appear in Table 14B. One could view "Pay/Promotion" and "Career Interests" as voluntary labor market decisions that should not be related to much of an earnings penalty. All other reasons are restrictions that have limited an individual's labor market behavior; these should be associated with earnings penalties.

Overall, career interests are the most likely reason for one's job and degree to be unrelated (36%). This is true for males and females, but not for minorities. Median earnings for this group are not particularly high, indicating that these career interests are based on nonsalary reasons. "No Job in Degree Field" is the second most popular reason, and these individuals suffer severe earnings penalties. While this group comprises 14.5% of all law graduates whose degree and job are unrelated; it comprises 17.5% of females and 23.7% of minorities.

Those who move outside their degree field for "Pay/Promotion" do exhibit even higher salaries than those who indicate that their degrees and jobs are closely related. This group comprises 15.6% of males, and only 2.4% of females who indicate that their job and degree are unrelated. Minorities who move outside their degree field for "Pay/Promotion" receive a substantial earnings premium. As one would expect, family-related reasons for working outside one's degree field fall much more heavily on females (20.7%) than males (5.5%). Females suffer a large earnings penalty when this restriction is present.

Special Focus: The Kessler Effect

One interesting aspect of the earnings data in Table 12 is the high earnings of law school graduates who are working in health-related occupations: $60,000 compared to $70,000 for those working in all occupations. For whites in health-related occupations, the median earnings are $96,000. What explains this?

Anecdotal evidence indicates that there is a population of professionals who possess both law and medical degrees. David Kessler, head of the Food and Drug Administration, is perhaps the most notable example. One faculty member of a top-10 school of law is a former neurosurgeon. How large is this law/medicine population?

The NSCG data indicate that in 1993 there were an estimated 1,113 individuals who had both law and medical degrees, or about one-third of the 3,408 law school graduates working in health-related occupations (health-related occupations include physicians, dentists, optometrists, as well as nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, and health technicians). The median income of this group was $104,000.

Mobility

In 1993, about 83% of employed law school graduates were working in legal employment as lawyers, judges, or college law teachers. For new graduates, approximately 85% were working in the legal field. These data imply a movement out of law over the course of one's career. What is the nature of this movement?

Table 15 contains data on five-year occupational mobility for law school graduates. These data are restricted to law graduates employed in both 1988 and 1993, so it excludes those who were not in the workforce or were unemployed in either year. In 1988, this population was 582,375 law graduates who were working in the legal field. Between 1988 and 1993, 17,848 (3.1%) of these law graduates left legal employment for other occupations. During this same period, 10,736 law graduates (1.8%) who were working

in nonlegal occupations changed jobs to legal occupations. The net mobility over the five-year period was thus a loss of 7,112 of the legal field, or 1.3% of 1988 legal employment.

Table 15 calculates mobility by career age (years since receipt of law degree). In terms of gross mobility, the first 15 years after receipt of degree are very active, with 3–4% of those in the legal field leaving. These high rates of "out-mobility" are partially offset by movement into the legal field from nonlegal occupations. These data are consistent with most early career movement of individuals as they change jobs to find their niche. Midcareer (career age 16–25) seems to be more stable, with relatively low mobility rates. Later career mobility picks up, with high rates of out-mobility for those with career age greater than 25. Those in career age 30 or more have the highest rate of exit from the legal field. It is likely that these senior law graduates are moving out of active practice into administrative positions (see "Special Focus: Career Progression of Law School Graduates," p. 14).

TABLE 15
Five-year mobility by career age, 1988

		Legal to Nonlegal Mobility, 1988 to 1993			
1988 Career Age (years)	A 1988 Legal Employment	B Gross Out-Mobility: Legal to Nonlegal	C Gross In-Mobility: Nonlegal to Legal	D Net Out-Mobility: Legal to Nonlegal (C)+(B)	E 1993 Legal Employment
1–5	136,980	-4,765	4,140	-625	136,355
6–10	128,490	-5,592	2,505	-3,087	125,403
11–15	137,634	-4,440	3,271	-1,169	136,465
16–20	80,493	-1,420	197	-1,223	79,270
21–25	41,164	N	155	155	41,319
26–30	27,680	-613	N	-613	27,067
30+	29,934	-1,018	468	-550	29,384
Total	582,375	-17,848	10,736	(7,112)	575,263
		Percent of 1988 Legal Employment			
1–5	100.0%	-3.5%	3.0%	-0.5%	99.5%
6–10	100.0%	-4.4%	1.9%	-2.4%	97.6%
11–15	100.0%	-3.2%	2.4%	-0.8%	99.2%
16–20	100.0%	-1.8%	0.2%	-1.5%	98.5%
21–25	100.0%	N	0.4%	0.4%	100.4%
26–30	100.0%	-2.2%	N	-2.2%	97.8%
30+	100.0%	-3.4%	1.6%	-1.8%	98.2%
Total	100.0%	-3.1%	1.8%	-1.3%	98.8%

Note. Includes only law school graduates employed in both 1988 and 1993. Legal employment defined as "lawyer or judge" or "college law teachers." N = small number, data suppressed.
Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates.

Table 16 contains data on reasons for changing occupations from 1988 to 1993. For new graduates (career age 1–5), working conditions, change in career and professional interests, and family-related reasons are the top reasons for out mobility. Working conditions as a reason falls off quickly for career ages 6–20 then goes back up for 26–30.

Change in career and professional interests is a frequently given response for all career age groups. This implies that a substantial portion of out-mobility from legal employment is by individual's choice. For the senior law graduates (career age 30 or more) who left the legal field, almost 86% said it was a result of a change in career or professional interests. Three-fourths of law graduates at career age 16–20 indicated family-related reasons for leaving the legal field. Job loss ("laid off or terminated") accounts for very little career mobility. For law school graduates at career age 30 or more, over half have moved out of legal employment because of retirement. Because this group was employed in 1993, it is likely that these law school graduates retired from the legal field but found employment in a "hobby" job or other "lifestyle" change.

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TABLE 16
Reasons for leaving the legal field, by career age, 1988–1993

	1988 Career Age (Years Since Degree)						
	1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	26–30	30+
Total Leaving Legal Employment	4,765	5,592	4,440	1,420	N	613	1,018
Reasons for Leaving							
Pay, Promotion Opportunities	28.5%	26.4%	58.9%	16.7%	N	71.1%	0.0%
Working Conditions	73.2%	46.2%	38.0%	4.2%	N	71.1%	0.0%
Job Location	19.1%	29.3%	12.9%	12.5%	N	0.0%	0.0%
Change in Career/ Professional Interests	68.1%	65.6%	63.9%	26.9%	N	71.1%	85.8%
Family-Related Reasons	41.6%	13.7%	20.9%	76.0%	N	0.0%	0.0%
School-Related Reasons	9.2%	15.6%	23.1%	0.0%	N	28.9%	0.0%
Laid Off or Job Terminated	1.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	N	0.0%	0.0%
Retired	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	N	0.0%	57.2%
Other	8.0%	15.6%	3.3%	0.0%	N	0.0%	0.0%

Note. N = small number, data suppressed. Respondents were asked to check all reasons that apply, thus percentages add up to more than 100%.

Includes only law school graduates in legal employment in 1988 and in nonlegal employment in 1993.

Source: 1993 National Survey of College Graduates

Summary and Conclusions

The major findings of this report are as follows:

1. The demographic composition of the law school graduates is shifting toward more minorities and women with both groups composed of a high percentage of new graduates in the field. As such, characteristics such as earnings and occupational employment partially reflect career youth as opposed to systematic differences in labor market status.

2. Overall, a high percentage of employed law school graduates (83%) are working as lawyers, judges, or in colleges as law teachers. The next most popular occupation is high-level management positions, which have similar earnings to legal occupations for law school graduates. The data indicate that the majority of those law school graduates who move out of legal occupations do so voluntarily and perceive their law degree to be of value in these nonlegal occupations.

3. There is very little labor market underutilization of law school graduates. Overall, 93% of all law school graduates are in the labor force (88.9% of females and 95.1% of males). The labor force participation rate for minorities is not systematically lower than for whites. Only about 5% of all law school graduates are "underutilized;" that is, involuntarily working outside their degree field, unemployed, involuntarily working part time, or a discouraged worker. These underutilization rates are higher for females, minorities, and recent law school graduates.

4. Employed females are just as likely as employed males to be in legal occupations, contrary to some perceptions that the field is unfriendly to females thus driving them out of law. Females are more likely to be out of the labor force than males, and tend to do so for family reasons. However, there are occupational differences by sex, with females more likely to be in administrative support, education, and clerical positions.

5. Overall, median earnings for females and minorities are less than those of males and whites. However, females and minorities work in different sectors (e.g., government, nonprofit) and different occupations. They are also more likely to be recent law school

graduates. Once one controls for experience, occupation, and employment sector, there are few systematic differences in earnings by sex and race; indeed there are several sectors (e.g., U.S. government) where median minority earnings exceed those of whites. These findings directly contradict earlier findings on minority and female earnings.

6. Overall, exiting from legal occupations is slight, averaging about 1.3% net loss over the five-year period 1988–1993. During that time, the legal occupations lost 3.1% of workers; however, this was partially offset by 1.8% of workers in nonlegal occupations moving into law. These mobility rates vary considerably by career age, with higher mobility in the first 15 years after receipt of the law degree. Most out-mobility is by choice. Over one's entire career, there is net movement out of law and net movement into high level management and into teaching college law.

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